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## The Literature of American Library History, 2008–2009

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# The Literature of American Library History, 2008–2009

## Abstract

Historians of American libraries and librarianship might hesitate to consult the wisdom of former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as a guide for conducting research. However, the aforementioned quote does provide a useful context for this essay because historical investigations must go beyond what we already know. Research has to delve into the past to recapture the “unknown unknowns” that await our curious probing of dusty documents and forgotten files and help us make better sense of all that has gone before and serves as prologue for the present. This examination seeks to identify, summarize, and emphasize, where appropriate, those writings that appeared during 2008 and 2009 to assist us all in better understanding our shared library past.

## Disciplines

Library and Information Science

## Comments

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## The Literature of American Library History, 2008-2009

Edward A. Goedeken

There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. These are things we do not know we don't know.

Donald Rumsfeld

Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future.

Ray Bradbury

### Introduction

Historians of American libraries and librarianship would probably not ordinarily consult the wisdom of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as a guide to how they conduct their research. But the quote above does provide a useful context for the foregoing essay because historical investigations must go beyond what we already know; our research has to reach into the past to recapture the “unknown unknowns” that await our curious probing into dusty documents and forgotten files and help us make better sense of all that that has gone before which serves as prologue for the present. The essay that follows seeks to identify, summarize, and emphasize, where appropriate, those writings that appeared during 2008 and 2009 to assist us all in better understanding our shared library past.

### Sources and Historiography

Although no major encyclopedias or other works of this sort appeared during 2008 and 2009, several items were published that deserve attention. Jeffrey Wilhite updated Smith's 1968 *A Chronology of Librarianship* with his own volume that brings the chronology up to the year 2000. Wilhite's work treats each year separately and is nicely crafted and easy to use. One wishes someone could go

back and make Smith's older work equally accessible. (1) Another source replete with facts and figures is Oswald's new edition of *Library World Records*. The first edition came out in 2004, but in this new version, Oswald was able to add more information to many of the entries and update the bibliography. In so doing he increased the earlier book's length by nearly 100 pages. (2)

Wilhite's chronology summarized events in the last half of the twentieth century, and Schlup and Paschen's new anthology captures significant library writings in the last half of the nineteenth century. (What is it about the latter half of centuries—are they more interesting than the first half?). Often referred to as the Gilded Age—Mark Twain had a hand in fashioning that name—the post-Civil War era was filled with larger-than-life people and enough inventions to keep the patent office hopping for decades. Schlup and Paschen have gathered together over four dozen reports, essays, private communications, and other musings of our illustrious leaders of the past and provided them in chronological order. It is not overly clear why the editors chose what to include in their 330 page volume, but there is something for everyone here. *Librarianship in Gilded Age America* captures many of the most significant essays of the period and should provide a good place for both novice and experienced library historians to acquaint themselves with the thinking of our founders. (3)

Robert V. Williams, who has spent his career navigating the intersection of library and information science history, provides an insightful assessment of how these two “first cousins” have operated over the past decades. He believes a both branches of library and information science have a great deal to learn from each other and we can benefit as well from his essay, which he first gave as a presentation to the Board of Advisory Editors of *Libraries & the Cultural Record* in March 2008. Another useful resource Williams maintains is an extensive online guide entitled “A Bibliographical Guide to a Chronological Record of Statistics of National Scope on Libraries in the United States.” Part I of the guide covers 1829-1899; Part II covers 1900-1999. This is a powerful online is essential for anyone exploring statistical data on libraries of all types in the United States. (4)

It is time to update the *Dictionary of American Library Biography*, whose most recent supplement came out in 2003. Start keeping an eye out for potential entries for the third supplement, which should get underway soon.

## **Special, Private, and Subscription Libraries**

Histories of the precursors to the public library continue to appear on a regular basis. A few years ago I despaired that this part of our historical past was being neglected, but my concerns were unfounded. The bicentennial of the

founding of the Boston Athenaeum in 2007 has recently generated two very well-crafted volumes. Of the two, Wendorf's collection of essays is especially useful with contributions by Kenneth Carpenter, Barbara Hebard, and Sally Pierce. Wendorf himself provides an informative introduction and historical overview of not only the Athenaeum, but also of American subscription and circulating libraries in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Katherine Wolff's shorter work focuses mainly on the first fifty years of the Athenaeum and is much more of a straightforward narrative. By the way, Wolff also contributed a chapter to the Wendorf collection. (5) J. P. Morgan's magnificent private library has been the subject of a number of books over the years, including the recent biography of Belle da Costa Greene. Paul Byard and his fellow authors focus more on the architectural history of the Morgan library with essays covering the work of Charles McKim and Renzo Piano. (6)

Industrial and mercantile libraries continue to spark attention from scholars. Dale Brown surveys the public lectures offered by Cincinnati's Mercantile Library between 1835 and 1935. Numerous famous Americans including Horace Greeley, Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and even President William Howard Taft presented public lectures on this famous site. Another mercantile library garnishes the attention of Adam Arenson, who provides a nicely written overview of the St. Louis Mercantile Library. Moreover, Arenson publishes his history in the *Missouri Historical Review*, which as a non-library history journal helps expand the readership of libraries beyond just our crew. (7) Bart Dredge provides insight into the relatively neglected topic of industrial libraries in the south with his examination of the efforts the managers of textile manufacturers to provide information in their textile libraries that would shape and control the behavior of workers in that industry during the first half of the twentieth century. Dredge's work should provide a nudge for further exploration into other industrial libraries and their impact on the everyday life of the working man and woman. (8)

Patrick Valentine, who has contributed numerous historical pieces over the years on North Carolina libraries of various types, turns his attention to describing the efforts of over two dozen communities to develop useful library collections for the local citizenry in the years prior to the Civil War. Valentine's work is—as usual—well documented and well presented. (9) Kent Smith delves into the background to the establishment of the National Library of Medicine in 1956. Smith's research base is impressive and his story one not often told. In much less detail, but still useful as at least a starting point for a more extensive treatment, Williams and Zachert survey the history of the Special Library Association. Special libraries had been around since at least 1876, but the early part of the twentieth century arrived before the SLA was officially organized in 1909. A good full-blown history of this century-old library organization is certainly due! (10)

Rounding out this section we have Metzmeier and Campbell's assessment of the personal law library of John Harlan, who was the father of the famed jurist John Marshall Harlan. Staying within the legal environment, Brenda Vogel devotes the first chapter of her book on prison libraries with an overview of prison libraries and their impact on prison life from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first. This is another instance of a special population whose relationship with libraries has not been well described. Kevin J. Hayes, who published a huge book that examined the books and reading habits of Thomas Jefferson in 2008, that same year also authored an interesting intellectual history of Patrick Henry and his personal library. How he found the time to produce two books on two prominent American political figures in the same year is indeed impressive! In her investigation of the private libraries of individuals as diverse as Samuel Pepys and Sir John Soane, Margaret Willes devotes a chapter to the collecting habits of Thomas Jefferson. Willes' observations are not especially novel, but she does capture the basics of Jefferson's approach to building his personal library. (11)

As I have said in the past about this section, more work can and should be done to bring to light the numerous ways Americans created and maintained non-public and non-academic libraries in the years prior to the Civil War. Dredge's account of how southern industrial libraries were used to shape worker behavior provides but one example of a large uncharted territory for further research.

## **Public Libraries**

As the largest sector of American librarianship, the historical scholarship devoted to the growth of public libraries has continued at a commendable pace. The writings noted below cover a broad geographical spectrum running from Oregon to Texas to Chicago and elsewhere. Book length studies are still relatively rare, but at least one was actually quite good. Thomas McClintock's history of the Corvallis-Benton County library in Corvallis, Oregon is well done with extensive citations to city council and library trustee minutes. Moreover McClintock spends his first two chapters providing a well-crafted outline of the early history of public libraries in the United States. I have seldom seen a better presented historical overview of our public library predecessors. (12) A smaller publication filled with more pictures than words and part of a popular history series *Images of America* treats the history of the Gadsden, Alabama public library. (13)

The article by Bernadette Lear that examines public library holdings of Mark Twain's most significant books is a breath-taking *tour de force* of scholarship that simply has no recent equal in its efforts to grapple with a large topic and produce impressive results. Lear surveyed by e-mail or *in visu* the catalogs of nearly 4,000

public libraries to determine what Mark Twain novels public libraries throughout the United States owned in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Despite the ALA's stance opposing this sort of literature, Lear's study provides statistics showing that many libraries did indeed acquire Twain's writings. Moreover, Lear published her findings in a well-regarded literary studies journal. If you have not Lear's piece yet, please do so! Her methodology is a model for many other future investigations. (14)

Before I turn to more articles that detail the past of specific public libraries, I want to mention two recent contributions by Douglas Galbi, an economist for the Federal Communications Commission, who has spent a good amount of time analyzing public library circulation records. Both articles appeared in *Public Library Quarterly*: one deals with circulation of non-book materials since World War II and the other examines book circulation since the middle of the nineteenth century. Galbi has certainly done his spadework and it would be interesting to see how his research compares with other ongoing research in public library circulation records. Although Galbi works in the aggregate, his findings could prove useful for those focused more closely on the circulation patterns in one particular library. (15)

State library history has gotten some attention recently with Louisiana and Texas each receiving their due. Faye Phillips charts the remarkable career of Charles Gayarré, who as an historian and as secretary of state, worked tirelessly for decades to foster and defend the growth of Louisiana's first state library which was established prior to the Civil War, grew rapidly and then declined precipitously as Louisiana's economy struggled during the last part of the nineteenth century. (16) David Gracy, who in 2010 published his long-awaited history of the Texas State Library, provides an early taste of that larger work with the publication of a modified first chapter in the *Texas Library Journal*. Readers will want to consult the larger work for a full appreciation of Dr. Gracy's scholarship. Jennifer Cumming's applies some solid research skills in both primary and secondary sources to tell her story of the Texas State Library's traveling libraries and bookmobile program during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. (17)

Although we are all aware of the general background to the ALA intellectual freedom statement that came out of the Des Moines Public Library in 1938, the precursor to this movement actually occurred in Chicago as the public library there grappled with challenges to its holdings from the local Russian and Polish communities. Joyce Latham reveals how Abe Korman, who led the library's foreign language department, came into conflict with long-time director Carl Roden about how best to handle these materials. This is good historical scholarship and is an example of how historians are constantly pushing back the origins of our most established library standards. (18)

Moving about the rest of the country we have Nora Quinlan's nicely crafted piece on Florida libraries during the Great Depression. Although not lengthy, Quinlan's text is accompanied by a nice bibliography, which will be useful for additional explorations into this interesting topic. (19) Indeed, how public libraries in other parts of the country coped with the severe fiscal challenge of the 1930s should provide impetus for years of future investigations.

In her article on teen services at the Pratt Central Library in Baltimore, Deborah Taylor traces the evolution of this essential service to the young people of Baltimore, which began at Pratt in 1932 under the leadership of the well-known Margaret Edwards. On the other side of the continent, the architectural history of Oregon's public libraries receives its due in a short piece by Jim Scheppke, State Librarian of Oregon. Gary Kurutz, who has written a number of times about the history of California libraries and is special collections curator for the California State Library, delivers another of his interesting articles on early 20<sup>th</sup> century California county library service buttressed with lots of photographs but no references. Finally, Elaine Hardy has published a timeline of significant events in the history of Georgia public libraries. (20)

During 2009 *Tennessee Libraries* published three dozen short histories of libraries of all types—academic, community college, public, or special—that thrive in Tennessee. The quality of the contributions varied from those reflecting some serious historical work to others that were more popular in nature. I will not list all of them individually, since they are indexed in *Library Literature*. Anyone interested in Tennessee library history would be advised to investigate these issues of *Tennessee Libraries*. (21)

The public nature and importance of government information is reflected in two recent articles by Dorman and Hogenboom. Dorman delves into the history of the 1890 census, which was destroyed by fire in 1921, and assesses its impact on later scholarship about how Americans lived and worked at the end of the nineteenth century. Hogenboom discusses, in the light of 9/11, how the government handled information vital to the security of Americans after World War II and the development of the atomic bomb. In both cases the public's right to know came into conflict with national security and the decisions of individual agencies to restrict access to government information. Along these same lines, Brett Spencer provides a finely honed history of how American libraries sought to protect their collections—both public and otherwise—during the emergency of the Second World War. Spencer's synthesis of the various contemporary sources is quite impressive. Finally, although not specifically focused on public libraries, but perhaps more on libraries in general, Richard LeCompte charts the interesting tale of the efforts during the 1980s by the Authors Guild in the United States to establish via federal legislation a Public Lending Right that would compensate authors for



the alleged loss of revenue that resulted from the interlibrary lending of their work. This intriguing effort never came to fruition because of changes in the political climate, but it is an amazing story and one well told. (22)

Given that there are more than 17,000 public libraries in this country, more than almost any other public agency, there is always plenty of historical work that can be done. (23) Just using Bernadette Lear's work on Mark Twain is one obvious example of the direction future work can take. We need more histories of large public libraries, as well as new studies of state and county libraries. Building on the current work of Wayne Wiegand and others, we need to know a great deal more about what public libraries acquired and how they served their communities in all periods of our history.

## **Academic Libraries**

Compared to public libraries, there are certainly many less academic libraries in this country. Nevertheless, each state possesses a plethora of community, state, and private institutions, so there is no shortage of opportunities for historians to explore how the libraries in these institutions began, grew, and evolved over the years. Despite the abundance of subjects, the number of examples to discuss this time around in this category is quite modest.

First to the book-length treatments. Members of the staff of the Northwestern University library published a very impressive history of Deering Library, which is the current main library's predecessor. Richly illustrated with informative essays by Jeffrey Garrett, Russell Clement, and Janet Olson, this slender volume of 150 pages is a joy to peruse. With chapters devoted to different eras of the Deering Library's remarkable history and short vignettes of both library and campus leaders of the past century, this work serves its purpose well. The Deering Library book was oriented towards its architectural heritage, and this approach is also reflected in a thematic issue of *Yale Library Studies* that focuses on "Library Architecture at Yale". Like the Deering Library volume, the Yale architecture essays contain numerous illustrations and drawings detailing the building and design of the many libraries—both large and small—that dot the Yale campus. Although neither of these publications reflect deep historical research, they both contribute in their own way towards a greater understanding of the library past for both Northwestern and Yale. Finally, in this section on lengthy works I should include a 2008 issue of the *Harvard Library Bulletin* that is devoted to William Bond's exploration of that great bibliophile, Thomas Hollis, and his generous donation of thousands of books and pamphlets to the fledgling Harvard College library in the middle years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (24)

The shorter works in this section are actually better than the large ones. An example of this is Patrick Valentine's excellent study of college libraries in North Carolina prior to the Civil War. Valentine's research base is astonishing and his discussion of the heretofore neglected topic of college library development in that state both informative and essential toward improving our understanding of how these libraries grew during this formative period in our history. If you want to see how good history is done, take a look at what Valentine has wrought! (25) More narrowly focused—but in a good way—is Jeremy Dibbell's history of the library at Union College in Schenectady, New York. Delving into the college archives, Dibbell was able to trace the correspondence between the early president, John Blair Smith, and the indefatigable bookseller, William Young. Of special value, is Dibbell's comparison of Union College and its collection growth to other Colonial libraries such as Yale and Harvard. Dibbell's essay was awarded the Justin Winsor Prize for 2007-2008 and its quality of research and presentation clearly justifies this honor! A 2008 issue of *Slavic & East European Information Resources* contains several articles that trace the growth of Russian collections at the Library of Congress, Yale University, and the University of Hawai'i Library in Honolulu. (26)

Other aspects of academic libraries received attention during the period under review. In a larger work on the modern concept of the information commons, Elizabeth Milewicz provides an introductory chapter that traces the background of this relatively recent phenomenon, which for the most part began only about 30 years ago. She assembles a solid set of references for her text. Similarly, Steve Fisher looks at how the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries (CARL) got its start back in 1973 and served as an early example of an academic library consortium that became widely accessible throughout this country before dissolving in the mid-1990s. (27) The topic of library consortia in the academic arena is one that has barely been explored by historians and is certainly worthy of more scholarly attention.

When one reflects on the vast number of branch libraries that thrived in this country over the past century before they began to close one by one, it is surprising that we have not had more articles on those interesting mini-libraries. A recent well-crafted piece by James Neeley on the engineering library at the University of Kansas is a case in point. Neeley describes the influence of long-time engineering dean, Frank O. Marvin, who maintained a lifeline belief that any engineering student should be exposed to and comfortable with a wide range of literature—not just that relating to the engineering discipline. Neeley's article represents good history and could serve as a model for similar efforts in the future. Though less impressive with its research base, Suzan Alteri provides a review of how the education library at Wayne State grew from its humble beginnings in the basement

storeroom of the main library. The role of women in administrative posts has been of special interest over the years and Moran, Leonard, and Zellers reexamine this topic in an insightful essay. They conclude that women have made great strides over the past years in obtaining near parity with their male counterparts in as library directors, especially in larger libraries. (28)

University library collections are built in many ways—through gifts or through acquisitions of published works—and great libraries are many times built best through valuable gift donations. Such is the case for the Mesoamerican collection at Princeton, which was the result of the collecting efforts by two men: William Gates and Robert Garrett. Basler and Wright tell the tale of how those two men acquired a magnificent collection of Mayan materials and manuscripts, which found their way eventually into the Princeton Library in 1949. Finally, on an altogether different topic, Brian Ryckman and his colleagues examine the relatively short history of off-campus services at Grand Valley State University in western Michigan. Similar to tales about branch libraries, or consortial agreements, endeavors by academic libraries to support off-campus teaching is another room in that mansion of history that is still largely unexplored. (29) With the number of colleges and universities scattered over the countryside, there will never be a shortage of opportunities for future research. Whether it is biographical or institutional or somewhere in between, the need remains acute for more research devoted to the history of academic libraries and librarianship.

## **Library Associations**

In the previous section I reviewed Jeremy Dibbell's Winsor award winning essay on Union College and in this section I can point to Jean Preer's receipt of the Justin Winsor award for 2006-2007 for her essay which deals with the ALA's contribution to the 1952 presidential election. Preer, a long-time library science educator who now teaches at the Indianapolis campus of Indiana University, has crafted an impressive study of ALA involvement in the national political environment to promote more voting and a better informed electorate. Preer's study is top-rate and reflects the work of a careful and learned historian. We have known a great deal about the ALA's political efforts in the 1960s and 1970s, but the early post-war period remains important as well. (30)

This section boasts only two other entries this time around. Cheryl Gunselman shares her knowledge of the 1905 ALA meeting in Portland, Oregon, which was only the third time since the ALA was founded that the annual meeting was held west of the Rocky Mountains. Conference speakers included: J.C.M. Hanson, who talked about the Library of Congress catalog card project; Herbert

Putnam, who shared his views on the Library of Congress as a national library; and Melvil Dewey on the topic of cooperation in library work. Gundelman's essay helps expand our limited awareness of this early and important ALA conference. Remaining on the west coast, Linda Frederiksen traces the centennial history of the Pacific Northwest Library Association, which was published—not surprisingly—in the *PNLA Quarterly*. (31) As this new century moves along, it would be quite useful if historians examined the decades-long histories of many more library associations throughout the country. Certainly there are many state library associations that deserve attention.

## **Library and Information Science (LIS) Education**

Given that a number of the historians in our midst spend their professional lives in a library science classroom, it is not surprising that the history of LIS education continues to generate a certain amount of scholarship that may be uneven at times, but at least moves our knowledge marker forward. To begin with, Beverly Lynch, who has written about LIS education over the years, provides a valuable historical summary of our educational enterprise since its inception in the late nineteenth century with Dewey's school and continues her story right up to the present time. Although constrained by the limits inherent in an article-length treatment, Lynch's work covers the highlights of library education and is accompanied by a good list of references. From a little bit different slant, Laurie Bonnici and her co-authors explore the ramifications of the iSchools and their impact on entire profession of library science education. I must admit to not being overly conversant with the whole concept of the iSchools, but it looks like this reconceptualization of what subjects should be included in the information curriculum is of great importance for the future of library education and thus something worthy of our attention. (32)

*Advances in Librarianship* published at thematic issue in 2008 devoted to exploring the impact of various types of funding sources on the librarianship. Trudi Hahn traced the history of federal support for library science research, while Linda Smith authored a concluding chapter that surveyed the background of for all types of libraries beginning with the Carnegie grants in the first decades of the twentieth century and bringing the story up to the present with the Kellogg Foundation grants to the monies emanating from the 1996 Museum and Library Services Act. Each in their own way, Hahn and Smith help expand our still limited knowledge about how these essential financial agencies supported library development over the past century. (33)

Although its emphasis is on LIS programs in Europe, Pierre Delsaerdt generates a number of good ideas about incorporating book and library history into

the library and information science curriculum anywhere. This is not necessarily a new topic to library historians in this country, but Delsaerdt makes a compelling argument for the inclusion of these two not-so-popular subjects in contemporary library schools and the value this type of study has for students of librarianship. Sugimoto, Russell and Grant chart the production of doctoral dissertations for nearly 80 years in their piece for *JELIS* by examining the provenance of over 3,000 LIS dissertations since 1930. The authors are particularly interested in the relationship between doctoral production and the overall health and vitality of the degree granting school. An interesting piece, to say the least! (34)

### **Feminist, Ethnic, and Multicultural Librarianship**

A major new monograph about African-Americans and southern public libraries was published in 2009. David Battles tackles the complex issues surrounding African-American access to library services in various southern states and sets them within the larger context of the African-American experience in American history. Using those valuable and underutilized master's theses produced during the 1950s at Atlanta University, prominent contemporary reports such as Gleason's *The Southern Negro and the Public Library* (1941) as well as many other secondary resources, Battles has crafted what must be considered the best treatment of this topic to date. Although only 150 pages long, Battles' study can set the framework for future scholarship that would examine at similar depth the African-American experience in other parts of this country. Another excellent work on an important African-American librarian is Laura Burt's well-done exploration of the career of Vivian Harsh, long-time head of the George Cleveland Hall branch of the Chicago Public Library. Harsh, who directed her library from 1932 to 1958, devoted her working life to providing effective library services to her economically challenged community, seeking to enhance access to both old and young alike. At the Hall Library, Harsh painstakingly built the Special Research Collection about African American life that rivaled in quality the better known Schomburg collection in New York City. (35)

One of the more interesting articles in this section examines the introduction of survey methodology as a means of determining patron interest in library services. We, of course, take surveys as a time-honored approach, but using it as a research tool had to start somewhere. In a nicely-constructed article in *Library Quarterly* Kate McDowell explains how in 1882 Caroline Hewins, director of the Hartford, Connecticut Public Library, first surveyed her fellow colleagues about the reading habits of young patrons for a report she was preparing for the ALA. McDowell shows how significant women were in establishing this research

methodology as one of the ways librarians could obtain reliable information about their work. This type of historical scholarship is rather unusual since it examines the way our ancestors conducted research, which in itself is quite intriguing. Also noteworthy is Caroline Daniels' narrative, based on primary and secondary sources, about women librarians at an army post during World War I. Given that women were often discouraged from working on military posts, especially in wartime, Daniels' essay sheds light on what a group of determined women could do to promote library services to servicemen while operating under rather difficult working conditions. It would be valuable if others could follow-up on Daniels' work and investigate women librarians at other military posts during both world wars. (36)

The rest of the items in this section could just as well be placed in the biography section of the review, but since they focus on women, I will place them here. John V. Richardson, Jr., who has contributed important historical writings over the years, turns his attention to recounting the fascinating library career of California's Harriet G. Eddy, who flourished during the early decades of the twentieth century and made significant contributions to the development of Soviet libraries in the 1920s and 1930s. Cheryl Gunzelman describes the busy professional life of Cornelia Pierce, who served for years as Oregon State Librarian. Beginning in 1905 Pierce actively promoted the development of public library services influenced by the reform tenets that prevailed during the Progressive Era in this country. Gunzelman's article appeared in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, which is the major state history journal for Oregon. I am always pleased when library history gains exposure to a wider historical audience! (37)

The contribution of Winifred Sewell to twentieth century librarianship as the originator of the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) at the National Library of Medicine is the subject of Ruffner and Glenn's 2009 essay in *L&CR*. Sewell's work was significant in fostering the development of the MeSH headings and their impact in the burgeoning online searching environment that culminated in the advent of MEDLINE in 1971. Finally, Erin Lawrimore delves into the life and times of Margaret Cross Norton, who as head of the Illinois State Archives for thirty-five years, made seminal contributions to both archival practice and the professional of archives through her efforts to establish and promote the Society of American Archivists. (38)

## Technical Services, Preservation, and Technology

Although it usually received less attention than other sections, the backroom aspects of our profession were not neglected completely this time around. First and foremost is William McHugh's lengthy treatment of the classic 1927 *Union List of Serials* which set the standard for all subsequent union lists and had not here-to-fore been investigated to the extent provided by McHugh. Issued as part of the GSLIS *Occasional Papers* series, this is a serious contribution to the literature based on multi-archival research that could serve as a model for future scholarship. This is quality scholarship that deserves wide readership. (39)

Historical developments in cataloging and classification developments account for several articles including a nicely constructed piece in *Library Resources & Technical Services* by Martha Yee that recounts the background to the decision in 1901 that the Library of Congress would begin distributing its cataloging to American libraries in the form of the well-known three by five cataloging card. Yee traces the nineteenth century developments that led to this significant event in the history of American cataloging and classification. Although much of this is not new to American library historians through the work of Miksa and others, Yee's article remains a well-researched and useful reexamination of early twentieth century cataloging thought. In another article within the pages of *LRTS* Steven Knowlton surveys the debate that surrounded the post-World War II cataloging rules as they were shaped by the thinking of Seymour Lubetzky and the reactions—strong at times—of the library community to these proposed changes. Knowlton's essay is a finely wrought summary and assessment of this critical period that laid the intellectual basis for all subsequent cataloging codes. Also quite impressive is Broughton's informative and well constructed essay that explores both the basic ideas of Henry Bliss and how Bliss' theories of knowledge organization have influenced later efforts to devise effect classification schemes. (40)

Not as well known as Lubetzky or Bliss, but still an important figure in special libraries cataloging and classification, Julia Pettee created the Union Theological Seminary classification system during her thirty years as head cataloger for that library. Walker and Copeland delve into archival sources to flesh out Pettee's career both at the Union Theological Seminary as well as her time at the Pratt Institute. Pettee was a classmate of Anne Carroll Moore and represented an example of the generation of early women librarians who instilled a professional approach to librarianship that reflected their library school training. Using local archival sources, but few secondary sources, Goldberg and Clemons survey the history of cataloging at the University of Louisville. It would have nice

if the authors could have compared Louisville's experiences with other similar academic institutions. (41)

Law librarians have maintained a long-standing interest in the history of their corner of librarianship, especially through the pages of their premier journal, the *Law Library Journal*. Two recent articles continue this tradition. Diane Murley, who authors the "Technology for Everyone" column in *Law Library Journal*, broadens her usually modern focus to review the use of technology in law librarians during the twentieth century. Along those same lines, Patricia Turpening recounts how law libraries have implemented various preservation techniques in their libraries over the same time period. (42)

Finally, Jean Weihs, who writes a short column for *Technicalities*, provides a short history of shelving, which although not a serious historical piece, does provide references to some of the basic historical works on the broad history of libraries and librarianship. In fact, a well-researched study of library shelving should be a topic on someone's to-do list—and soon! On a different subject altogether, George Needham and Richard Van Orden, both long-time OCLC employees, chart the thirty year history of the OCLC Members Council, which provided a forum for OCLC user groups to interact with the management of that foundational bibliographic utility. Lori Kappmeyer summarized the career of Olivia M. A. Madison, long-time director at the Iowa State University library and a prominent figure in cataloging circles of both the American Library Association and the International Federation of Library Associations. I must not conclude without noting a recent book that describes the fascinating history of the punched card as an organizing device for all sorts of business machines, and was, of course, the basis for all library automation for much of the twentieth century. (43)

## **Biography**

Since librarianship is fundamentally what people do either individually or collectively, one could argue that a separate biographical section is unnecessary. Still, I have found it useful to gather together in one spot those works that focus primarily on the life and work of a specific person as it relates to the library profession. Interestingly enough, the first book I will mention is actually about two people: Philip and Mary Jane Keeney, who were librarians who served as spies for the Soviet Union in the post-war period. Louise Robbins worked hard to bring to a conclusion the original research conducted by Rosalee McReynolds, whose untimely passing occurred while the book was underway. Robbins, whose knowledge of the post-war period is extensive, has done great justice to McReynolds' manuscript and we now have a remarkable story of two individuals who sought to assist Soviet intelligence efforts while employed as librarians are



various institution. This is good history, well researched and well presented by two of our master historians. (44)

Life as a public services librarian in a contemporary California public library is seldom told with such verve and humor as that found in Scott Douglas' sprightly and somewhat off-beat account of his life on the front lines of a branch library in Anaheim. It is actually hard to believe some of his tales, but he swears they are true. In a much more sober vein, Alan Gribben provides a well-researched portrayal of the great Texas bookman Harry Hunt Ransom. Ransom's decades at the University of Texas as an administrator at various levels provided the opportunity for him to create a lasting legacy through the creation of the world-renowned Harry Ransom Center. Milner and O'Connor share their vast knowledge of the life and times of Granville Stuart, who among many other occupations was the head librarian of the Butte Montana Free Public Library during the early years of the twentieth century. Prior to his library career, Stuart had been a gold miner, cattle rancher, and even ambassador to Paraguay and Uruguay! (45)

One of our profession's most seminal thinkers and long-time faculty member at the library school at the University of Illinois, F. W. Lancaster, was the focus of the Spring 2008 issue of *Library Trends*. Lancaster's career and contributions to librarianship are well known, but this collection is still quite valuable. I particularly liked Arthur Young's assessment of Lancaster's famous book on paperless information systems. (46) Another collection of articles pay tribute to the lengthy career of Estelle Brodman, who is considered one of the premier health science librarians of the twentieth century. Brodman served as editor of the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* between 1947 and 1957 and made significant contributions to the development of automation in libraries. She was also highly regarded as an historian of medicine. (47)

I will conclude with a quick nod to three shorter biographical pieces. In a speech given before the Powell Society in 2006, Gerald Haslam reviews Lawrence Clark Powell's contributions to California librarianship and to the growth of the UCLA library. Carissa Vogel explains how Arthur Beardsley led the University of Washington Law Library over 20 years between 1922 and 1944 and also served as vice-president and president of the American Association of Law Libraries in the late 1930s. Beardsley also wrote one of the first legal research textbooks. Finally, Glynn Harmon shares his remembrance of William Goffman, who developed pioneered a number of mathematical information science approaches during his time at Case Western Reserve University between 1959 and 2000. (48)

## Reading, Printing, and Publishing

Over the years the items in this section have become more and more numerous forcing me to be increasingly selective in what I review and what I leave out. Although the writings I include are rather limited in number, considering the vast outpouring of literature in this area, I believe I have identified some of the most significant ones for the readers of *L&CR*.

The period under review witnessed the completion of a truly magisterial undertaking whose publication spanned the first decade of the new century. The fourth and fifth volumes in the multi-volume *History of the book in America* appeared in 2009. Volume four, which focused on the period from 1880 to 1940, and volume five which treated the years from World War II to the present, both consist of numerous well-written essays dealing with a wide range of topics relating to the history of books and book culture. Since each volume contains over two dozen chapters, I will leave it to my readers to examine each of these newest volumes and see for themselves the high quality of scholarship each contains. Volume three of this set came out in 2010, so the set is now complete. Needless to say, the five-volume *History of the Book in America* will stand for years as a foundational set for all future explorations of this exciting topical area. (49)

Two well known book history scholars produced notable books recently. David Pearson, who has published monographs dealing with bookbinding history as well as a highly useful handbook on conducting book history, published a well-illustrated and thoughtfully presented overview of the role of books as cultural objects within a digital age. Pearson concludes that the burgeoning popularity of the digital format dictates that we carefully examine the importance of the printed book as an enduring artifact to make sure its value is appreciated and maintained for future generations. Robert Darnton, certainly one of our foremost thinkers and writers on the history of the book, has collected together some of his most recent essays that treat the past, present, and future of the book. Darnton's observations are always insightful and this most recent collection does not disappoint. Along these same lines, I need to make sure I highlight Christine Pawley's impressive synthesis of reading theories in her discussion of the significance of how readers come to their texts and how the institution can play a role as a place where readers and writers can intersect. Pawley's erudition, as usual, is remarkable and certainly worthy of sustained consideration. (50)

David D. Hall, another of our luminaries in the history of books, recently published his study of seventeenth-century book culture in New England. Hall has written extensively on the cultural history of this region in that century, and this work builds on that corpus of already-published work. Along those same lines, Matt Cohen surveys the broader context of writings on New England book history

in an essay published in the journal *Book History*. Moving into the more recent past, David Welky provides an absorbing portrait of how Depression-era Americans used various print sources—from comic books to newspapers to popular magazines—as a way to cope with the dispiriting times of the 1930s. (51)

Over the years the University of Wisconsin Press has published a number of books dealing with different aspects of print culture as part of the series *Print Culture History in Modern America*. Under the combined editorial skills of James Dankey, Wayne Wiegand, and Christine Pawley, this series has encompassed some very good historical works. In 2008 the Charles Cohen and Paul Boyer edited a new volume that examined the role of print in the history of religion in America. More than a dozen essays explored the impact of print on religious groups as diverse as Quakers, Jews, and Mormons. In honor of James Dankey's long career at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Wiegand and Pawley put together a conference in Madison in 2007 that brought together a group of scholars to both honor Dankey and to share their ongoing research in the role of alternative print sources for social history. The conference proceedings were published in the Winter 2008 issue of *Library Trends*. Among the essays is Pawley's useful history of the now well-known Center for the History of Print Culture in Modern America, founded by Dankey and Wiegand in 1992, and directed by Pawley in recent years. (52)

With all this discussion about the history of book culture, where would we be without the publishers who actually create the finished product? This time around we have short monographs about three of our profession's more well-known publishing houses—all appearing in 2008. In short order: Robert Fleck recounts the thirty year history of Oak Knoll Press, which has, in its short lifetime, become an important platform for book history scholarship. Another well-known publisher, Gale, receives its due from John Tebbel, one of our most prominent contemporary historians of print culture. Finally, Nicholas Basbanes, another prolific writer on the topic of books and readers, put together a 200-page history of Yale University Press. These three books, each in their own way, provide a gateway into the inner workings of the publishing industry in the twentieth century. Beyond the three above-mentioned titles, I also want to acknowledge Marcus' extensive history of American children's literature publishing. Although not devoted to a specific press, Marcus' narrative begins with the Colonial period and carries the story up to the end of the twentieth century. (53)

Other publishers generated shorter treatments. Amy Root examines how the Alfred A. Knopf Company came up with its distinctive Borzoi logo, which shows a Russian wolfhound in mid-stride. Cecile Jagodzinski tackles the large topic of an overall history of American university presses, which would seem to be rather difficult to accomplish within a journal article's twenty pages. Still, if nothing

else, she at least covers the general contours of this complex subject leaving for others the task of filling in the gaps. In an article in the state history journal *New York History*, Ruma Chopra sheds light on the publishing career of Hugh Gaine, an eighteenth century New York printer who got caught up in the challenges of producing a rebel newspaper during the Revolutionary War. I am always pleased when our scholarship appears in the broader historical literature. Trysh Travis surveys the impact of women on the print history movement, which serves as an excellent corrective to the often male-centered focus of that scholarship. Finally, Joan Boudreau recounts the efforts the U.S. government made to contract the publishing of its western exploration activities in the pre-Civil War period to commercial presses. (54)

For years we have been plagued with the modern human condition of too many books and too little time to read them. In response to this challenge, the twentieth century witnessed two famous efforts to winnow out the chaff from the wheat when it came to what contemporary Americans should read. In 1909 Charles Eliot created his “Five Foot Shelf” of *Harvard Classics* and later in the century the indefatigable president of the University of Chicago, Robert M. Hutchins and his able colleague, Mortimer Adler, crafted their multi-volume *Great Books of the Western World*. Christopher Beha reports in sprightly prose his determined reading of the entire contents of the *Harvard Classics*. Meanwhile, Alex Beam treats us to a well-crafted history of the Hutchins-Adler collaboration. From a greater distance, James Allen considers the larger issue of what makes great books great and how they influence our lives. The Allen book is over 500 pages long, but worth a look if time can be found. (55)

I will conclude this section with a nod to Ted Striphas’ interesting investigation into the still vibrant life of print in the digital age. Whether it is Oprah Winfrey’s book clubs or the astonishingly huge readership of Harry Potter books, that old-fashioned print format still has a bit of life left in it. Finally, Farren and Imholtz, Jr. have gathered together a set of essays about the fifty year history of the Baltimore Bibliophiles. (56)

## **General Studies**

This section always seems to get a sort of catch-all for writings that don’t fit comfortably in the earlier parts of this essay. Of course, there are still publications that are indeed general in nature, such as some recent overall histories of libraries, and these will be considered first. Given the already rather lengthy nature of this review, I will keep my remarks relatively brief on this final batch of writings.

Fred Lerner has updated his 1998 *Story of Libraries* with a new edition for 2009. He adds an interesting chapter on the science of information and also revises

and expands his list of references. Lerner's book is probably still the best recent history of libraries, although for more detail and a better grasp of the older historiography we need not forget Jackson's 1974 classic or the Michael Harris' 1984 revision of Elmer Johnson's equally valuable history. Another recent general treatment is by Stuart Murray, who has spent most of his professional career writing on military topics. In *The Library: An Illustrated History* Murray covers in a sprightly—and well illustrated fashion—the major high points of the world's library past. For the uninitiated, Murray's text is quite fine. Not a history, per se, but still quite historical in nature, is Alberto Manguel's ruminations on the library as an institution within human culture. Manguel, who is famous for his studies of the act of reading, brings an incredible erudition to his latest book. (57)

Histories of the profession are represented in Toni Weller's recent study of the emerging field of information history. Weller, who is now editor of *Library History*, spends a little over 100 pages surveying this admittedly broad topic. From a more philosophical standpoint, Steve Fuller, who has written extensively on social epistemology and how knowledge is shared socially, examines the disciplinary uniqueness of library and information science within the intellectual community. Fuller's writings—sophisticated in their presentation—are always an interesting counterpoint to more traditional LIS approaches. Alan Gilchrist brings together in one volume more than a dozen essays that explore in a number of ways the past, present, and future of information science. The longer view of information history is found in the scholarly and serious tome by Leonard Dudley, while a more popular approach to the evolution of information over the centuries is presented by McNeely. (58)

Charles Osburn, long-time faculty member at the University of Alabama LIS, has spent his retirement years thinking about the role of the library within the broad context of society and culture. The result is a large book that discusses the philosophy of libraries and librarianship from the perspective of someone who has spent a lifetime thinking about exactly what libraries really mean as a social agency within complex cultures. Osburn's book is not necessarily easy to read, but it is an important contribution to that thin literature devoted to the theory and philosophy of libraries. Jean Preer, another long-time LIS scholar, examines the thorny issue of library ethics in a book-length study whose focus spans the length and breadth of our profession's history. Preer has brought together in one place a very useful assessment and synthesis of how librarians have grappled with a host of ethical challenges over the years. Both the Osburn and the Preer books deserve much more discussion than space allows me to do here. (59)

Other book-length treatments of various topics that should be at least briefly noted include the new fourth edition of Williams and Abbott's fundamental work that reviews the basics of bibliographical and textual studies. Hazel Bell recounts

the professional lives of our most famous index-makers, while Robert Hauptman explores the remarkable history of documentation through an analysis of style manuals as well as how literary figures have historically paid homage to their sources. Going back even further in our literary heritage, Barry Powell provides a solid basis for understanding how the world's writing systems evolved from their origins in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and China. Finally, Matthew Fishburn provides a sober history of another unfortunate human activity that has received some attention over the past decade—book burning. (60)

The historiographical enterprise received some attention in the last few years. Three recent books can serve as examples of how historians remain curious about what they do. Stéphane Lévesque examines the broad field of historiography in his smoothly written overview of what is admittedly a very complicated topic. Peter Burke, one of more well known cultural historians updated his 2004 cultural history textbook in 2008, and it remains an excellent place to learn the basics of exactly what cultural history is. Finally, three practicing historians at James Madison University put together a nice introduction for any novice historian on the rudiments of historical research in an era now influenced greatly by digital information sources. (61)

Although not a lengthy piece, Fran Miksa's erudite musings on the historical dimensions of how libraries have organized and described information over the centuries and how library users have reacted to these efforts is a fascinating piece of part theory, part historiography, and part library science. Miksa brings to his essay a lifetime of writing and teaching about how libraries organize and present packages of information and a perusal of his latest thoughts would benefit us all. From a different direction, Bernadette Lear explains how library postcards can serve as a useful source for the study of architectural—as well as cultural—library history. (62)

Expanding on Lear's discussion of postcards as primary sources, a couple of recent essays treat the topic of diaries as an excellent primary source for scholars. Heather Beattie investigates the role women's diaries have played in recent scholarship about women's daily lives, while the Zboray's—indefatigable historians of print culture—explain their use of diaries and other types of manuscript materials in their ongoing research into New England's literary past. Getting a bit more into archival theory, Shelley Sweeney provides a thoughtful analysis of origin of that basic archival principle—provenance. (63)

## **Conclusion**

Donald Rumsfeld would never be confused with a professional library historian. Yet, his observation that there existed “unknown unknowns” does strike

at the heart of the historical quest it seems. As students of the past we are educated in the ways of the current “conventional wisdom” and then spend our succeeding days and years investigating whether those so-called historical truths are—in the words of Von Ranke—“wie es eigentlich gewesen.” In the preface to her posthumously published study of Keeney spies, Rosalee McReynolds observed that the number of people in our country “who call themselves library historians could be counted on the fingers of fewer than ten hands.” (64) McReynolds was probably not too far off in her estimate. Despite our small numbers, the quality of historical scholarship produced over the past fifteen to twenty years has consistently improved with better attention to primary sources and more awareness of the larger historical framework. The recent work by Lear that appeared in the journal *Nineteenth Century Literature*—a decidedly non-library history publication, is especially noteworthy as an example of the need for library historians to broaden their scholarly platform to include journals in related disciplines. To do so would be a good thing.

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## Notes

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